

CLAIMS

1. An optical cross connect switch, comprising:

2 a beam generating portion receiving an optical input fiber having an
end, and providing an optical signal from said end, and having a means for
4 generating a substantially collimated communication beam containing said
optical signal, and a means for generating a substantially collimated
6 companion alignment beam, wherein said communication beam and said
companion alignment beam propagate away from said beam generating
8 portion in closely spaced, substantially parallel paths;

a beam receiving portion receiving a plurality of optical output fibers,
10 each said optical output fiber having a core and an associated position sensor
adjacent and in a known positional relationship to said core;

12 a beam directing portion for receiving said communication beam and
said companion alignment beam from said beam generating portion, and a
14 means for directing said communication beam to one optical output fiber of
said plurality of optical output fibers, and said companion alignment beam to
16 said associated position sensor wherein said companion alignment beam
strikes said position sensor at a location and said sensor generates an
18 electrical signal corresponding to said location; and

a means for controlling said means for directing said communication

20 beam, said means for controlling receiving said electrical signal and adjusting
said means for directing said communication beam in response to said
22 electrical signal to position said communication beam on said core.

2. The optical cross connect switch of claim 1, wherein said companion
2 alignment beam is unmodulated.

3. The optical cross connect switch of claim 1, wherein said beam
2 generating portion further comprises a substrate formed with a fiber
alignment hole for receiving said optical input fiber.

4. The optical cross connect switch of claim 1, wherein said means for
2 generating a substantially collimated communication beam includes a lenslet
positioned a distance from said end of said optical fiber wherein said optical
4 signal passes through said lenslet.

5. The optical cross connect switch of claim 4, wherein said lenslet is
2 formed with a focal distance, and said distance from said end of said optical
fiber is approximately equal to said focal distance.

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6. The optical cross connect switch of claim 1, wherein said beam
2 receiving portion further comprises a substrate formed with a fiber alignment
hole for receiving each fiber of said plurality of fibers.

7. The optical cross connect switch of claim 1, wherein said beam
2 directing portion further comprises a first beam director formed with a
steerable beam directing element having a reflective surface, and a second
4 beam director formed with a plurality of steerable beam directing elements
having a reflective surface, said communication beam striking said reflective
6 surface of said first beam director for reflection to one of said plurality of
beam directing elements in said second beam director for reflection to said
8 core of one said output fiber, and said companion alignment beam striking
said reflective surface of said first beam director for reflection to said one of
10 said plurality of beam directing elements in said second beam director for
reflection to said associated position sensor.

8. The optical cross connect switch of claim 1, wherein said means for
2 controlling said means for directing further comprises a control system
comprising a processor having an input for receiving switching information,
4 and an output generating a control signal for said means for directing said

communication beam to said core of said output fiber.

9. The optical cross connect switch of claim 8, wherein said control
2 system receives said electrical signal corresponding to said location and
determines an optical feedback position error, and generates a second control
4 signal for said means for directing said communication beam to said core of
said output fiber.

10. The optical cross connect switch of claim 1, wherein said beam
2 receiving portion further comprises a lenslet positioned a distance from said
end of each said optical fiber wherein said optical signal passes through said
4 lenslet.

11. The optical cross connect switch of claim 10, wherein said lenslet is
2 formed with a focal distance, and said distance from said end of said optical
fiber is approximately equal to said focal distance.

12. An optical cross connect switch comprising:
2 a beam generating portion generating a communication beam and an
alignment beam wherein said communication beam and said alignment beam

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4 propagate away from said beam generating portion in closely spaced paths;
a beam receiving portion having at least two output fibers, each
6 output fiber formed with a core and having an associated position sensor in a
known position relative to said core;
8 a beam directing portion positionable to direct said communication
beam to said core of one said output fiber of said at least two output fibers,
10 and said alignment beam to a location on said associated position sensor,
wherein said associated position sensor generates a position signal
12 corresponding to said location; and
a controller receiving said position signal and generating an optical
14 feedback control signal, wherein said beam directing portion receives said
optical feedback control signal and adjusts said beam directing portion to
16 position said communication beam on said core.

13. The optical cross connect switch of claim 12, wherein said beam
2 generating portion further comprises a substrate formed with a fiber
alignment hole for receiving an optical fiber having an end and retaining said
4 end of said optical fiber in a known location relative to said alignment beam,
wherein said communication beam propagates from said end of said optical
6 fiber.

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14. The optical cross connect switch of claim 13, wherein said beam
2 generating portion further comprises a panel formed with a lenslet, said
lenslet positioned adjacent said end of said optical fiber to collimate said
4 communication beam.

15. The optical cross connect switch of claim 13, wherein said beam
2 generating portion further comprises a panel formed with a lenslet
positioned in said alignment beam to collimate said alignment beam.

16. The optical cross connect switch of claim 15, wherein said paths of
2 said communication beam and said alignment beam are substantially parallel.

17. The optical cross connect switch of claim 12, wherein said paths of
2 said communication beam and said alignment beam are parallel.

18. The optical cross connect switch of claim 12, wherein said paths of
2 said communication beam and said alignment beam are converging.

19. The optical cross connect switch of claim 18, wherein said beam

2 generating portion and said beam receiving portion are separated by an
optical path having a length, and wherein said communication beam and said
4 alignment beam cross approximately midway along said optical path.

20. The optical cross connect switch of claim 12, wherein said paths of
2 said communication beam and said alignment beam are coaxial.

21. The optical cross connect switch of claim 12, wherein said beam
2 receiving portion further comprises a substrate formed with a plurality of
fiber alignment holes, one said fiber alignment hole for receiving each said
4 optical fiber and positioning said core of said optical fiber.

22. The optical cross connect switch of claim 19, wherein said beam
2 receiving portion further comprises a panel separated from said end of said
fiber by a distance, and having a lenslet positioned in said communication
4 beam wherein said communication beam passes through said lenslet.

23. The optical cross connect switch of claim 22, wherein said lenslet has
2 a focal length, and said focal length is approximately equal said distance
wherein said communication beam focusses on said core.

24. The optical cross connect switch of claim 21, wherein said beam
 2 receiving portion further comprises a panel separated from said position
 sensor by a distance, and having a lenslet position in said alignment beam
 4 wherein said alignment beam passes through said lenslet.

25. The optical cross connect switch of claim 24, wherein said lenslet has
 2 a focal length, and said focal length is approximately equal said distance
 wherein said alignment beam focusses on said sensor to form a spot.

26. The optical cross connect switch of claim 12, wherein said position
 2 sensor of said beam receiving portion further comprises a plurality of light
 sensing elements.

27. The optical cross connect switch of claim 26, wherein said position
 2 sensor further comprises a CMOS sensor.

28. The optical cross connect switch of claim 12, wherein said position
 2 sensor further comprises a position sensitive diode.

formed with a beam director, and said second panel formed with a plurality
4 of beam directors, one said beam director corresponding to each said output
fiber, wherein said communication beam and said alignment beam propagate
6 from said beam director of said first panel to one said beam director of said
second panel and to said core of said output fiber.

34. The optical cross connect switch of claim 33, wherein each output
2 fiber has an optical axis, and said corresponding beam director of said
plurality of beam directors is positioned along said optical axis.

35. The optical cross connect switch of claim 33, wherein said beam
2 director portion further comprises a turning mirror surface optically positioned
between said first panel and said second panel wherein said communication
4 beam and said alignment beam propagate from said directing element of said
first panel to said turning mirror and to said beam directing element of said
6 second panel.

36. The optical cross connect switch of claim 12, wherein said beam
2 generating portion further comprises a substrate formed with a fiber
alignment hole for receiving an optical fiber having an end and retaining said

4 end of said optical fiber in a known location relative to said communication
beam, wherein said alignment beam propagates from said end of said optical
6 fiber.

37. The optical cross connect switch of claim 12, wherein said beam
2 generating portion further comprises a LED generating illumination, wherein
said illumination forms said alignment beam and propagates from said beam
4 generating portion.

38. The optical cross connect switch of claim 37, wherein said beam
2 generating portion further comprises a mask formed with a hole and
positioned on said LED wherein said illumination is masked to form said
4 alignment beam.

39. The optical cross connect switch of claim 37, wherein said beam
2 generating portion further comprises a substrate formed with a lenslet
positioned in said alignment beam to collimate said alignment beam.